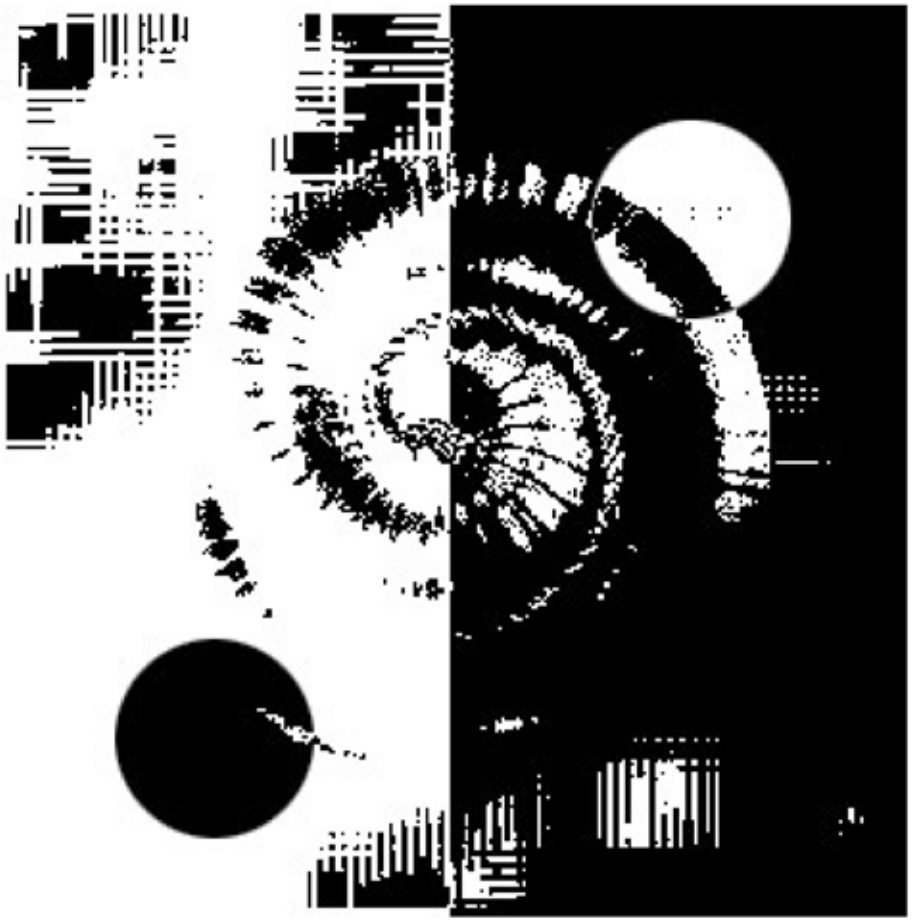
THE CHRISTIAN RADICAL.

A journal of progressive Christian thought and opinion.
Issue number 4 February 2006, free.



Meditations on the Simple Prayer of Saint Francis

By Chris Rooney

So first perhaps some explanation of this is in order. After coming back to my faith and to the church I spent much time in prayer because I wanted guidance concerning direct action from a Christian perspective. Really anything that I could use as a spiritual compass to guide me in my desire to be politically active. Then one afternoon while I was at Mass I started praying the Simple Prayer and it was almost as though it opened up for me. I started to see it as more than just a list of petitions but as a guideline for being an activist and yet still true to my spiritual convictions. Later that evening I sat down and wrote out my thoughts as an expanded form of this prayer, I don't consider this to be by any means complete and you reading this might see things I left out or stuff that could be presented better. If this is the case then please, by all means let me know what you came up with, or feel free to do the same thing as I have and create your own list. My e-mail address is at the back of the zine if you feel like sharing your insights with me.

Oh Lord Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace

To me is a call to embrace pacifism and non-violent resistance as the only truly revolutionary forces we have at our command. This first phrase seems also to encourage the individual to be a witness to peace in ones daily life. The only way that peace can come into the world is if we all bring it forth from within us by striving to bring an end to conflict even in our personal lives. Doing this could be considered bearing witness to the Peace of Christ and therefore making the individual an instrument of God's Peace.

Where there is Hatred Let Me Sow Love

To me would involve encouraging solidarity between people and groups but without militancy. All too often these days it seems that militancy is confused with dedication to a cause when in fact it is that naked aggression and belligerence which causes rifts to occur within the causes that we as leftists espouse. All too often people who might be genuinely concerned about an issue like Poverty or War or Racism can feel alienated or excluded from the very organizations that claim to be struggling against them. And sometimes the groups themselves end up divorcing themselves from the popular support they need in order to be taken seriously or to build the movement.

Where there is Injury, Pardon

It's been said, "Hate the sin, not the sinner". I think that this saying goes a long way towards illustrating the above phrase. Believe it or not it is possible to resist or speak and act out against oppression and tyranny while at the same time recognizing the humanity in ones opponents. Indeed it's the only way to stop a cycle of violence or recrimination before it starts. So many revolutions of the past have failed in part because the revolutionaries were too quick to forget the common bond of humanity between oppressor and oppressed and in so doing found it all too easy to get used to the whip hand, thus becoming oppressors themselves.

Where there is Discord, Unity

Once again this theme of solidarity is raised. To me the above phrase could be read as the natural result of acting on love and forgiveness. The political and religious left are so fractured these days, with people and groups totally unwilling or unable to move past what in many cases amount to petty ideological differences in order to unite in solidarity against the much greater conflicts of our time. And it's only through real solidarity and mutual aid that we will be able to face up to the challenges before us all in this new

Where there is Doubt, Faith

As a Christian I read this as a call to all the faithful to live ones beliefs as fully as one is able. To me this is about making my life as completely an expression of my belief in God as possible, through practicing the works of mercy in my daily life. And by trying to see the beauty and grace of God in all things and in so doing making everything I do an act of worship. Though there are many Christians in the world who would disagree with me I believe that evangelization is done entirely by God. It's true that this is accomplished through humanity but to me this has less to do with street preaching or handing out tracts than it does with trying to live a holy life and allowing the good example one sets to speak on behalf of ones faith.

Where there is Error, Truth

In the preliminary notes I made before sitting down to write this essay the only thing that came to my mind was "sometimes the greatest truth comes from the humility of saying 'I don't know'". I would like to add to this now by saying that it seems all too often these days that people associate Christianity with Conservatism or worse yet with Neo-Conservatism.
In a conversation I had a while ago with a friend, after I told him that I considered myself to be a Catholic Anarchist his response was to ask whether those things weren't mutually exclusive. And it is easy to see how that assumption can be so readily made when there are so many prominent Christians who would willingly go on international television and call for the assassination of a foreign president, or who would openly support dictatorships both at home and abroad.
Or on the other side of the fence, it seems quite often that the actions of some anarchists do more to discredit the movement than anything their detractors could come up with. Really, if one cares to look, error can be shown to exist everywhere which is why being able to admit ones own fallibility is the best place to start looking for truth.

Where there is Despair, Hope

As long as there exist people of good conscience who are not afraid to work for peace and truth and love and who have faith in goodness then there will always be hope enough in this world. Because goodness defeated is still greater and stronger than evil victorious.

Where There is Sadness, Joy

This can be a real challenge sometimes. How does one spread joy in times of personal sorrow? In my preliminary notes I wrote, "Try making a habit out of performing random acts of kindness." But once again I think there's still something missing from that. Last winter I went through a period of deep depression where I saw all my faults and how far I had strayed from what I know to be right and true. And I remember one night feeling so very sad and going into a convenience store to buy something to eat. There was a woman in the store who looked really down and out. She and I didn't even so much as glance at each other but as I was buying my food I thought to myself how just because I was miserable didn't mean that this person needed to suffer too and so I bought her some samosas and I think something to drink as well. I hope that it's this way of thinking that has often guided my actions.

Where there is Darkness, Light

It is my belief that if one were to make living this prayer the central focus of their life they would be going a very long way towards bringing light to our darkened world.

For it is in Giving That We Receive

It is in Pardoning That We Are Pardoned

And it is in Dying That We Are Born

Into Eternal Life

Amen

Saint Francis of Assisi

Praying for Ariel Sharon

By Michael Friesen

As of this writing, Ariel Sharon is in a critical but stable condition. By the time this article is published, he may well have passed away. Whatever the case, one thing is certain: Mr. Sharon's political career is over, at least as head of the Israeli government. This being so, it is an appropriate time to reflect upon the career that is a cause of much debate between Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Muslims, even among the Jewish community itself. It is my hope that in remembering Mr. Sharon's career we may learn from the mistakes he made while extending forgiveness to the man whom many Palestinians regard as their chief antagonist.

Ariel Sharon was born on February 27, 1928. Sharon's parents were of Russian descent and he grew up among socialists. His family faced ostracism from this community, however, when they went against the community's prevailing ethos. At the age of 14, a young Sharon joined a Zionist paramilitary organization, later becoming a member of the Haganah, which would evolve into the Israeli Defense Forces. During Israel's fight for independence, Sharon suffered a groin injury at the hand of Arab militants. He recovered and advanced through the military, taking a break to study at the University of Jerusalem before returning to his military career.

Sharon became commander of Unit 101, which was charged with retaliating against Arab forces that were hostile to Israel's existence. While major, Sharon's unit partook in the Qibya operation of 1953 that saw 69 Palestinian civilians massacred by Israeli forces. While violence was raging in the Israel-Palestine conflict, Sharon's life found itself besieged by tragedies. In 1962, his first wife died in a car accident. A friend playing with one of the elder Sharon's rifles shot their son five years later. These disasters were followed by good fortune, as Ariel Sharon would go on to marry his deceased wife's younger sister with whom he would have two children.

During this time, Sharon's life was not without scandal. In 1956, a mission led by Sharon at Milto led to the death of 38 soldiers under his command. In addition, he was accused of having attempted to provoke the Egyptians, who were in control of the area, into fighting such that Israel might win a military victory. While this temporarily set-back his advancement in the military, Sharon would go on to lead a major victory in the Six Day War before retiring from military service in 1973. That year, he returned to the military after a brief retirement. During the 1973 War, Sharon flaunted orders from above and was credited with playing a major role in winning a victory on the Sinai front.

By this time, Ariel Sharon had joined the right-wing Likud Party. As Defense Minister, Sharon oversaw the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre in which the Lebanese Phalange militia murdered hundreds of Palestinian refugees during the Lebanon War. The Kahan Commission declared Sharon to be guilty of personal responsibility in the assault even while recognizing he did not issue a direct order. It recommended that Sharon be removed from his post as Defense Minister. While Sharon once again suffered a setback, this time in his political career, he remained within the Israeli government serving in other posts from then on.

Throughout his career, Ariel Sharon has demonstrated hostility towards many of the peace processes that were being pursued by the Arab and Israeli governments. Although he is sometimes hailed as being supportive of the peace efforts, his record fails to demonstrate any substantial support for peace initiatives. In 1979, he voted against a peace treaty with Egypt; in 1985, he voted against a withdrawal from Lebanon; in 1991, he opposed Israel's participation in the Madrid peace conference; in 1993, he opposed the Oslo peace agreement; in 1994, he abstained from a vote for peace with Jordan; in 1997, he voted against a peace agreement with Hebron.

While seeming disdain for peace marked his earlier career, he has demonstrated a degree of openness since becoming Prime Minister in 2001, signing onto the Bush Administration's Road Map to Peace and professing support for the creation of a Palestinian state. Still, this support has more often than not resulted in less than admirable policies. Between 1975 and 1976, Sharon oversaw the number of settlers double in the Occupied Territories, asserting that this was the only way for Israel to retain these territories, despite the fact they legally belonged to the Palestinian people.

Sharon held different posts within the Israeli government before being elected leader of the Likud Party and Prime Minister in 2001. Palestinians accuse Sharon of inciting hatred when he traveled to the Temple Mount where Muslim holy sites are found, including the Dome of the Rock, and announced the Mount would remain under Israel sovereignty for all time. Since September 2000, a wave of suicide bombings known as the Second Intifada rocked Israel, claiming the lives of hundreds of Israeli civilians. Others point out that such attacks were being planned in advance of Sharon's visit and that his visit to the Temple Mount could not be seen as the main cause of the campaign.

In 2004, Sharon announced with the abandonment of Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip even while asserting Israel would maintain authority over the coastline and airspace of the area. While welcomed by many, the plan found resistance from the right wing of Israeli society. Numerous hardliner rabbis issued a ritual curse upon Sharon calling for the angel of death to strike him down. The move caused a split within Sharon's own party such that in 2005 he founded the Kadima party, a centre-right party that would compete with the Likud Party he once helped found.

While some have welcomed these moves, supporters of Palestine point out that the ongoing construction of a security wall on Palestinian territory affectively annexes the West Bank even while settlements continue to increase in the territory. On December 18, 2005, Ariel Sharon suffered a stroke that saw him recover during the Hannukah period. On January 4, 2006, Sharon suffered another stroke, this one far more dangerous to the Prime Minister's health. Medical authorities are agreed that Mr. Sharon's political career is now over.

Reflecting back on the career of Ariel Sharon is difficult for one such as myself who supports Palestinian sovereignty over the territory accorded to it in 1947. Mr. Sharon has been involved directly and indirectly in several atrocities, often against women and children, and has overseen many antagonistic policies such as the ongoing policing of the Occupied Territories and the aforementioned construction of the security wall. What's more, Sharon has remained insistent upon Israel maintaining control of East Jerusalem, which has been claimed by Palestinians as the capital of their future state.

I do not like Mr. Sharon. I abhor the policies, principles, and the extremism he stands for. I largely feel he and his supporters are responsible for untold suffering among the Palestinian people. Mr. Sharon is now sick. He may very well be facing death. In these troubled times, it is difficult to pray for our enemies. It is much easier to invoke the angel of death to punish our enemies. This is not the way of Jesus. Jesus taught us to love our enemies, to do good to those who persecute us, and bless those who insult us. We must love, do good to, and bless Mr. Sharon. This is not an easy teaching.

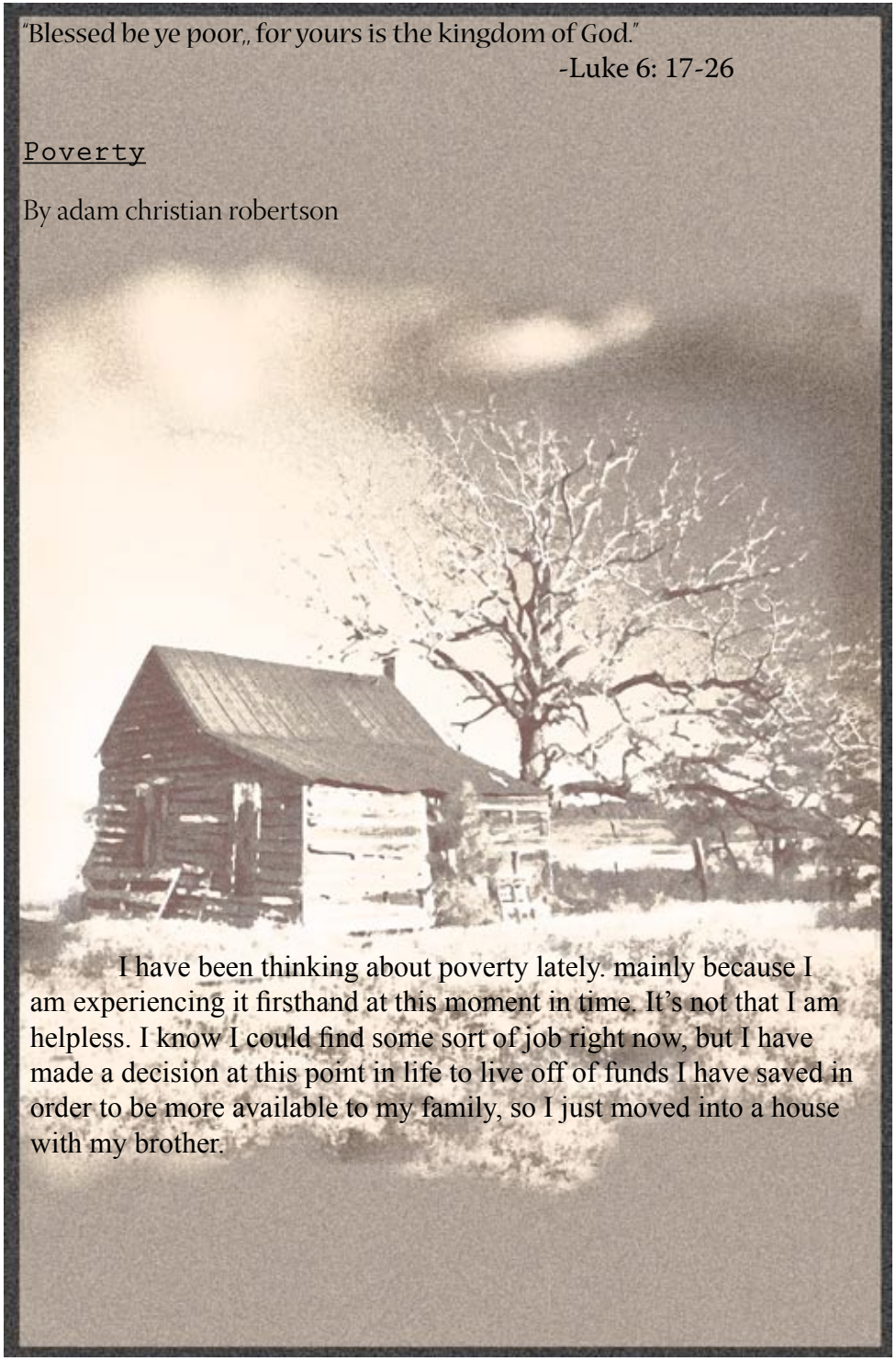
Violence can never solve the Middle East's tragic situation. If history teaches us anything it is that Israeli aggression, Arab retaliation, and Palestinian terrorism have done nothing to bring peace to this war-torn area of our planet. While the plight of the Palestinians is a tragic one, it need not be as miserable as it is. The people of Tibet have lived under Chinese occupation for as long as the Palestinians have lived under Israeli occupation, but their commitment to nonviolence has meant their cause has gained support around the world. Day to day life has been made bearable by non-resistance to aggression.

On this note, I would urge those in the Middle-East, not least those of us who profess faith in the Prince of Peace, to lay down their weapons and offer one another the olive branch of peace. When both sides are uncompromising in their aspirations and dominations, victory is impossible. The way forward is not through territorial acquisition, but through voluntary subordination. Only through the renouncing of revolutionary violence will the Palestinian people be able to move forward in their history. On this note, let us pray for Ariel Sharon.

"Blessed be ye poor,, for yours is the kingdom of God."
-Luke 6: 17-26

Poverty

By adam christian robertson



I have been thinking about poverty lately. mainly because I am experiencing it firsthand at this moment in time. It's not that I am helpless. I know I could find some sort of job right now, but I have made a decision at this point in life to live off of funds I have saved in order to be more available to my family, so I just moved into a house with my brother.

For the next six months I will be living on a fairly tight budget, pennies and dimes being counted and all that. This first month has been especially tight as we had to pay a rental deposit and electrical-turn-on fees in order to move in, which cost a bit more than I had expected. At this very moment I have no money to spend. For food I have one box of rice pilaf, some peanut butter, and a box of falafel mix But that does me no good because you need oil to cook falafels, unless I can come up with some clever way to make falafel pancakes or something like that.

I'm not trying to whine about not having much to eat. Actually, I am enjoying the experience. It's true. For the last year I have worked at a fairly decent job. I had a lot of extra money to play with, but during that time I would more often than not find myself rushing about to do things that usually involved spending my dollars in some weird elaborate way, like driving to Wall-mart (ten dollars gas) to get some piece of crap bookshelf that was probably made in a sweat shop somewhere. Now, unemployed, hardly any money to spare aside from very basic necessities, things are opening up in unexpected ways. I can't help but think of the saying "necessity is the mother of invention". For example, today I woke up and found that I had one slice of bread. It wasn't even a good slice. It was one of those end pieces of the loaf that most people never eat. But this morning I was so grateful to have that one end piece. I put some peanut butter on it. This accompanied by some fresh ground coffee that my bro and I found in a dumpster behind a bookstore completed my meal. It was a good breakfast. Had I been loaded with money, I would most likely have thrown out the bread and gone out to eat, spending ten to twenty dollars on breakfast at some fancy cafe. I can hardly imagine spending twenty dollars in one sitting. Right now even a few dollars would mean a lot. I could go walk to the laundry-mat and wash my starting-to-stink clothes, or buy enough groceries to last a week. Being short on cash has made me realize just how far a dollar will go if you stretch it.

The other thing I have begun to notice is that with all the extra time on my hands from not working, I have been forced into inventing ways to occupy myself. I hate watching television most of the time because my brain is too active, especially with all the coffee my brother and I have been drinking ever since we found several pounds of coffee beans in the dumpster behind a bookstore (twenty pounds, I'm not lying) So, to help me get through the day I have been going to the library and reading whatever I happen to be interested at the moment. In addition to that, I have started painting and, just now, I built a bookshelf out of scraps of wood I found in a dumpster at a nearby construction site. It is, if I may say so, a really good bookshelf. Perhaps better than something I would have bought at Wal-Mart.

All of this makes me think about life in the U.S. compares to what living in a smaller, poorer country might be like. How much of our "garbage" would folks from Mexico or Vietnam like to dig through and salvage from? Is the majority of what we hold as being important or "business" merely the lazy excessiveness of an overly wealthy nation? I already know the answer to that, but what worries me is that most people I talk to from the U.S. don't even have a clue about how wasteful we are with our time and money. Sometimes I think it could be a healthy thing for America if there were a sudden famine or a nation-wide black-out or our economy collapsed. It would be a scary thing for a lot of people, though I can't help but think it would also shake our country out of the wasteful complacency we have fallen into. I am sure there would be a lot less garbage, at any rate.

For now, I am enjoying living a more simple life. Some people say things like "Well don't you want to DO something with your life?" but I am discovering that what these people really mean is "Don't you want to be able to spend a lot of money?" Poverty, after all, far from being a negative thing in my life, is helping me to find value in things that I took for granted for so long that I stopped noticing they were there. Things like family, creativity, dumpsters, and lately, falafel mix...
Picture by Joy Ellison

A Visit With the Portland Catholic Workers

By Alex Iwasa

Within the last two years, two new Catholic Worker Houses have been formed in Northeast and North Portland, OR.

I was able to visit both last year while working and living in town.

The first to be formed, Dorothy Day House, is in Northeast. The focus of the community is in providing a safe space for women who are homeless, and/or have just been released from prison. They also have Taize Services when the weather permits.

A second house was opened last year, Whitefeather House. The house is named after Larry Cloud Morgan, Whitefeather of the Ojibwa, who had been involved in the Catholic Worker Movement in Minnesota, and was a Plowshares activist. The house is in North, and its primary focus is in Resistance, with the Workers holding a weekly Peace Vigil on Tuesdays from 5:30 PM-6:30 PM, at the US military recruiters' at 1317 NE Broadway. You can get in touch with these two communities via: e-mail: portlandcw@techforpeople.net; phone: 503-287-4230; and/or the mail: POB 11193, Portland, OR 97211. <

America and Russia
By Leo Tolstoy

1909

If only I had begun to preach love and brotherhood when I first began to write stories, I should have accomplished more. It was Schopenhauer and the Bible that converted me.

I am an individualist and as such believe in free play for the psychological nature of man. For this reason I am claimed by the Anarchists. Even George Brandes declares that I am in psychological harmony with the ideas of Prince Kropotkin.

The idea of Communism, and what it implies, refers to social conditions and their improvement. It would be senseless for me to demand that everyone should sleep as little as I do, eat the same food, wear the same clothes, or have the same feelings which are peculiar to me. A man is not a watch. Each is a world in himself. It is foolish, therefore, to worship the idea of Socialism. I worship the soul of man, which is the only reality.

After all, it does seem as if the world likes to be deceived. If we did not have our illusions we could never find the truth. Through error we come to virtue, through ignorance to knowledge, though suffering to joy.

These opinions are naturally not popular with the socialists, who therefore oppose me with bitterness. They love to spread broadcast the rumour that I am, instead of a doer of the word, a mere talker.

In my preachments of love and truth, I am not partisan. I condemn both revolutionists and reactionaries. I loathe the yoke of party; for I believe that all physical force is brutality

My opposition to administrative power has often been interpreted into opposition to all government. This, however, is not true. I oppose only violence and the view that might makes right

The only government in which I believe is that which exercises a moral authority. Moses, Buddha, Christ, these are the great lawgivers, the real autocrats, who ruled not by force, but by character, whose government was one of love, justice, and brotherhood.

I do not believe in a parliament as the final goal of social leadership, for instead of simplifying it only complicates human society. Parliament becomes an instrument to cheat the people, in that it deceives them into thinking that it truly represents them. They say, "Vox populi, vox Dei," but that is never the case; for the greatest of illusions is that which supposes that society can be improved by law.

Just as I hate a hereditary potentate, so do I hate a cheap Duma. A government which relies on iron and explosives, which executes a murderer who is so because of insanity or poverty, and which glorifies the butchery of innocent thousands, is the greatest instrument of wrong, the worst of oppressors.

Now I will explain why I criticize free America as severely as I do Russia. It is because it also is tending to the rule of force. The methods may differ, but the results are the same.

It is true that America does not exile one to Siberia or hang one on the gallows for protesting against the government. But nevertheless it has its lynching, and, what is far worse, its judicial murders. It has its great railroad casualties by whom thousands are killed by the criminal carelessness of the great corporations, and besides all this, it has the exploitation of the poor by the rich.

All this proves that government cannot improve the moral nature of man and that brute force always defeats its object. There can be no coercion of the soul. Every law must have the sanction of the free will.

Where America surpasses Europe is in its personal liberty, which is the heritage of a race of heroes. But this is doomed to be extinguished by the legislatures of a time-serving generation.

The greatest indictment against any country is the presence of capital punishment- which exists in such a form as if Christ had never been born. The judge who sentences a criminal to death is ten times guiltier himself. Oh, that ideas of humanity could end this tyranny, this black hypocrisy of legal procedure under which so many crimes are committed against humanity!

Yet the root of all the evils in civilization lies in the perverted teachings miscalled Christianity. The modern church is the greatest foe of man and the churchgoer a blind dupe.

Of course, my views are extremely unpleasant to the Russian Church, and often it has to plotted to get rid of me. Many suppose that I have so far escaped imprisonment only because of my prominence, but there may be another reason, which I am unable to explain. <

“Community Food Security and the Struggle for Autonomy”

By Alex Iwasa, Socialist Labour Party of America (SLP),
alexjiwasa@gmail.com

Community Food Security is the idea that as much food as possible should be produced locally, so that communities will be as self sufficient as possible, food will be fresher and therefore more nutritious, less energy will be used in packaging, transportation, and storage, and to help build and/or sustain local economies.

A farm I worked on in 2004 and 2005, the Growing Home Organic Farm, was part of the Community Food Security Coalition. (CFSC). According to its website, the CFSC is a “North American organization dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times.”
(http://www.foodsecurity.org)

I was able to attend their 2004 conference, and heard several speakers discuss organic food production in Indigenous Communities and urban areas, the struggle to get locally produced organic food to be available in their school systems, and many other issues. Among the speakers was a representative of the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin, Hopi from Arizona, and indigenous people from Hawaii. Later it occurred to me, that not only was their fight one and the same with mine, it actually had a great deal in common with the Zapatistas’.

When the Zapatistas rebelled under the slogan, “NAFTA is Death,” it signified the same destruction of native habitats through the gutting of food production and the extraction of resources by unfair subsidies and laws that favour big business, that farmers in the United States of America (USA) face. In fact, as the last two rounds of World Trade Organization (WTO) talks have shown, these sorts of double standards, and concern over Food Security are truly burning, international questions.

The farm I had been working for addresses these issues further in several ways. We were also part of the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT), and our trainees were ex-homeless, and/or low-income people, many of which were also ex-convicts.

We also started a small Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program the first year I was there, which was greatly expanded the second year. Our CSA was structured in a way that a number of people would pay us a certain amount, and then receive a box of produce weekly, dropped off at one of two sites in Chicagoland.

We operated an urban site in Back of the Yards, Chicago, and a rural site in LaSalle County, IL. As the trainees participate in the project, they are reintroduced to the work force, and are brought into formal discussions about access to quality food, and receive training in organic farming and wages.

The trainees bring to the project ideas, hopes, and experiences. Many have plans about the next level of training they will participate in, including the opportunity to work for the project the next year, and advancing their knowledge of organic farming.

The first year I interned on the farm, one of the trainees mentioned how she had lived across the street from Fred Hampton, when the Chicago Police had assassinated him, and fellow black panther, Mark Clark. We discussed this as we worked, and another trainee mentioned he had lived in the same neighbourhood, and remembered hearing the guns rattling.

Much like the Zapatistas, the Black Panthers' programs served their communities by increasing access to food, medicine, and better housing. We also tried to practice that spirit in many ways, including making sure there was time for the trainees to harvest extra produce for family, friends, neighbours and/ or themselves.

Our urban site was located at a Catholic Worker House, adding to the solidarity of our work by being able to share produce with their guests and volunteers, including some who became trainees or also volunteered with us, and by building a relationship with a likeminded group.

For more information please check the Growing Home project's website, http://www.growinghomeinc.org , and/or you can read more about Upper Midwest CRAFT at http://www.csalearningcenter.org/craft.html

Peace Among the Olive Trees

By Art Gish

At-Tuwani, West Bank
15 January 2006

On Thursday night, 5 January 2006, over one hundred Palestinian olive trees near the village of At-Tuwani in the South Hebron Hills were cut down, most likely by persons from the nearby Israeli settlement of Ma'on. The next morning nearly one hundred Palestinians and internationals gathered to mourn this horrific loss.

On Saturday morning, 14 January, about thirty Israelis associated with Ta'ayush, an Israeli peace group, joined about seventy Palestinians and internationals in that demolished olive grove to remove all the severed olive branches, make clean cuts on the trees so that the trees can heal more easily, and clean up the mess.

It was a joy to see Muslims, Jews and Christians working together, demonstrating that peace and reconciliation are possible. It was especially impressive how these Israelis had come to work with the people who are supposed to be their enemies. Yet more impressive is the willingness of the Palestinian Muslims to accept these Jews, when they suspect is was other Jews who destroyed their olive trees. These Israeli Jews had come to these Palestinians to express solidarity, but also as an act of repentance for what their people and their Jewish culture had become.

As a striking contrast, Israeli soldiers drove up in a Hummer and walked toward us with their semi-automatic rifles ready. Present in that field were two possible futures: one of peace and cooperation, and one of domination and control.

After working in the olive grove, the Israeli activists walked to the neighbouring Palestinian village of Tuba. The purpose of their visit was to express their condolences to a farmer whose lentil field had just been destroyed a few days earlier by Israeli settlers and to the farmer's brother who had just received a death threat from an Israeli settler.

Interfaith cooperation must include standing in solidarity with the oppressed, together resisting oppression, asking each other for forgiveness, and embodying in our relationships the seeds of the new social order for which we pray. On 14 January, we celebrated our common faith in the middle of a demolished olive grove.

The Eucharist: A Radical Solidarity

Reflections on 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

By J. Barrett Lee

Ancient Corinth was a lot like Vancouver today. It was a young city, recently rebuilt by the Roman Empire as a center for trade and culture, a radiation zone of possibility, novelty, and fecundity. It was also a major economic center. People flocked to the city in hopes of striking it rich in various entrepreneurial endeavors. The "evidence… suggests that Paul's Corinth was at once the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world."[1]

The Corinthian Christians were inevitably shaped by their culture. "Although they were the Christian church in Corinth, an inordinate amount of Corinth was yet in them."[2] The wealthier Christians in the Corinthian church probably maintained class distinctions in their celebration of the Eucharist. Unlike today's churches, the sacrament was probably celebrated in the context of a full meal that resembled the feasts held in honor of pagan gods at the time. This was a natural transition, but, as St. Paul observed, there were injustices in the pagan system that should not be carried over into the new Christian context. Jesus is unlike any of the pagan deities they previously worshipped, and he would not be honored by the same practices, however well-meant or established they may be. These meals "do more harm than good", according to St. Paul, because they maintain distinctions in the body of Christ, where there should be equality. As the people of God, the Christians are called out of social norms to demonstrate the existence of a new reality under God. All people stand on level ground at the foot of the cross.

---

1 **Gordon D. Fee.** *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 3.

2 Ibid. 4.

Under the old system, the poor were treated as objects, who were acted upon and had no voice of their own, in contrast to the rich, who were able to impose their will on those beneath them in the social ladder.[1] There was no relationship there, only power games. Real relationship under the reality of the Kingdom of God consists of "inter-subjectivity", where everyone has a voice.[2]

There must have been an outcry over this inequality, since word of it reached St. Paul's ears *in absentia.* It may even have been members of the poorer class who raised their voice. Perhaps the oppressive socialization had not managed to "take" with the lower classes. Maybe this is a sign that the message of equality under Christ had been received as especially good news to those oppressed.

St. Paul's solution to the problem is to "wait for each other". He tells the Corinthian Christians to put aside their social distinctions. Let the extravagant feasts continue at some other time. When the people of God gather together as the church, sit next to each other and partake of the same fare.[3] St. Paul also commands them to "discern the body" when they partake of the Eucharist. By this, he means not that they should look *within* or at the elements themselves, but that they should look *around* and recognize that all present in the meal are equal partners in the body of Christ.

It is at the table that they can have their eyes open to the reality of the Kingdom. When the master approaches the table with his servants, they partake of the one loaf and drink from the one cup. They are sisters and brothers in Christ. For the oppressor to be present in this moment provides an opportunity for God's grace to transform his heart. Similarly, when whites approach with blacks, men with women, citizens with foreigners, we are all made equal around the table.

The world nearly caught a glimpse of this in 1980 in El Salvador. Archbishop Oscar Romero declared that all parishioners must partake of the Eucharist in his church and his church alone. He did this to ensure the very reality that St. Paul was addressing. Archbishop Romero wanted to ensure solidarity among the sheep of his flock. The rich in his diocese would be forced to stand in the same communion line as the poor.

Archbishop Romero was assassinated on March 24, 1980. His policy has never been implemented. <

---

1 **Paulo Freire.** *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1973) 20.

2 Fee. 534.

3 Ibid. 568.

adam christian robertson lives in the Sierre-Nevada mountains in California. He is going to school for digital art and graphic design and makes the PDF version of the Christian Radical.
You can reach him at: ghettocottage@gmail.com

Alex Iwasa is a member of the Socialist Labor Party of America (SLP), http://www.slp.org. He is a roving activist currently learning to become an organic farmer. He can be reached at alexjiwasa@gmail.com he also has a blog at www.livejournal.com/users/socialistpoet

J. Barrett Lee is a Masters student in Christianity and Culture at Regent College in Vancouver Canada he can be reached at jbarrettlee@hotmail.com

Chris Rooney is a writer, musician and activist who lives in Vancouver Canada. He is involved in the Catholic Worker movement and the War Resisters Support Campaign. He can be reached at the.christian.radical.zine@gmail.com and has a blog at www.livejournal.com/users/broken_anthem/

Michael Friesen is taking time off from religious studies to travel throughout Europe. He is currently living in Ireland and will be living with the l'Arche community in Cork from February 2006 to February 2007. He has a blog at http://anarchocatholic.blogspot.com/

Karl Germyn, Born in North Vancouver in 1983, Karl discovered his faith in God through the care and love of his parents and friends. An avid writer, he presently lives in Vernon with his cat, Tom. He maintains a web log at http://www.livejournal.com/users/rhykan/ , and plays Dungeons & Dragons regularly. His favourite color is green, and is involved in editing the Christian Radical.

Leo Tolstoy's essay entitled *America and Russia* appears here with out permission to reprint.

Peace Among the Olive Trees By Art Gish, appears courtesy of the CPT email list.

All images have been taken from the internet unless otherwise credited.

The next issue of The Christian Radcal is on the theme of Christianity and Economics. If you liked this zine and feel you would like to contribute to the next one please send submissions as attached files to the.christian.radical.zine@gmail.com please also include a short bio and contact info (email/blog/website). Thank you for reading, it's your submissions that keep this zine in print.

Thanks again,
The editors, the Christian Radical

AWBC 2006

Annual International Multiracial Alliance
Building Peace Conference Invites
Activists to Portland, Oregon
August 26-28, 2006. Guest Speakers.

Workshops & International
Solidarity For Peace.
Grassroots Exhibition will include
alternative media & zine writers, Small
press and zine librarians, co-ops, collectives, DIY bands & musicians,
Indigenous & Native tribes,
intentional communities, independent
film, documentary & theater creators, dancers & supporters,
Low power
FM radio station creators, FreeSkool, Rainbow Gathering & all minority,
marginalized, underrepresented
groups & more! Scholarships,

,

The keynote speaker's night, all workshops, meals, tea, coffee, all festivals, community childcare, camping space and exhibition space in the International Grassroots and Networking Exhibition are all completely
free of charge
www.aworldbeyondcapitalism.com
_or
www.CommonUnityPeaceConference.org

Useful links and places:
-Vancouver's CW community
www.ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker/

-Catholic Worker international websites:
www.catholicworker.com
www.catholicworker.org

-Radical Progressive Christianity
www.jesusradicals.org
www.nonviolentjesus.blogspot.com
www.catholicanarchy.org

-Anti-War Coalitions
www.stopwar.ca
www.ivaw.net

-War Resisters
www.resisters.ca
www.wri-irg.org

-Other Activism
www.foodnotbombs.net
www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/
www.iww.org
www.slp.org

-Cool Places:
www.spartacusbooks.org
www.kalayaancentre.net
www.ploughshares.ca/

-Clothing
http://www.nosweatapparel.com/